

Bedford (G.S.)

UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK—DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE.

LECTURE

ON

OBSTETRICS

AND THE

DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN,

BY

GUNNING S. BEDFORD, M. D.,

PROFESSOR OF OBSTETRICS AND THE DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK.



SESSION 1846-7.

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1846.

LECTURE
INTRODUCTORY TO A COURSE
ON
OBSTETRICS
AND THE
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DELIVERED

OCTOBER 30th, 1846,

BY

GUNNING S. BEDFORD, M.D.,

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NEW YORK, Nov. 6, 1846.

PROF. BEDFORD:

Sir :—At a meeting of the Students of the University Medical College, held on Monday last, ROBERT M. O'FERRALL, of Ohio, being in the Chair, and J. SILL, of Michigan, Acting Secretary, it was unanimously

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to solicit, at the hand of the several Professors, a copy of their excellent Introductory Lectures for publication. We who have the honor to constitute the above Committee, take great pleasure in expressing the warmest desires of the Class, to which we would add our humble request, that a gratification so great to us, and at the same time so honorable to the Institution, as the publication of *your* eloquent and able address, delivered on Friday last, be not withheld.

With great respect, we are yours, &c.

ROBT. M. O'FERRALL, *Ohio*.
JAMES FARRINGTON, *New York*.
STEPHEN BRONSON, *New Hampshire*.
M. C. HOYT, *Vermont*.
JOHN B. SWEAT, *Maine*.
WM. H. WILBER, *Massachusetts*.
EDWIN BENTLEY, *Connecticut*.
GEORGE D. WILCOX, *Rhode Island*.
T. M. FRANKLIN, *New York*.
THOS. E. HUNT, *New Jersey*.
ROBERT MARTIN, *Pennsylvania*.
CHAS. GALLAGHER, *Delaware*.
MILES W. PALMER, *Maryland*.
SAMUEL RIXEY, *Virginia*.
ALBERT MYERS, *North Carolina*.
EDWARD SILL, Jr., *South Carolina*.

W. N. KING, *Georgia*.
J. D. HOLLY, *Alabama*.
J. F. DISMUKES, *Mississippi*.
JAMES F. SEGUIN, *Louisiana*.
J. P. GARVIN, *Tennessee*.
ROBERT J. BRYAN, *Kentucky*.
JOHN F. CONLAN, *Ohio*.
ZIBA FOOT, *Indiana*.
JAMES NOBLE, *Illinois*.
LEON DE ALVEAR, *S. America*.
ALEX. HARVEY, *Canada*.
DANIEL VASBINDER, *Canada*.
MATHEW O'CALLAGHAN, *Ireland*.
R. W. FISHER, *Florida*.
GEO. A. SMITH, *Texas*.
THOMAS FRYE, *Arkansas*.

By J. SILL, Secretary of Committee.

NEW YORK, Nov. 7th, 1846.

Gentlemen :—I acknowledge, with great pleasure, the receipt of your polite note of yesterday, requesting, in behalf of your fellow-students, a copy of my Introductory Address for publication. I cannot disguise the satisfaction I feel at your approval of that Lecture, and, in return for your kindness, I most cheerfully accede to your request. Be pleased to assure the Class of my devotion to its interests, and accept for yourselves personally my warmest wishes for your success and happiness.

Very truly, your friend,

G. S. BEDFORD.

Messrs, ROBT. M. O'FERRALL, J. SILL,
and Committee.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN :

THE season for patient and laborious research has returned, and these halls are again to be devoted to the discussion of the numerous grave and complicated questions connected with the philosophy of the healing art. These questions will involve issues of the deepest interest to you, because they are directly associated with the great principles on which is erected the fabric of Medical Science; nor will they be less important to those for whose preservation from the ravages of disease, and the anguish of suffering, you have consented to encounter all the sacrifices and toil, which constitute such a large portion of the legacy bequeathed to every devoted student of medicine. The profession which you have selected, whilst it is ennobling in its influences, is most arduous and trying in its practical application. You will be required to surrender your time, and often, too, your peace of mind, to the calls of those who look to you for professional counsel. Your walks will not be amidst the gay and fascinating circles of society—they will be limited to other scenes. Your presence will be needed in the chamber of sickness and sorrow—there it is that science will proclaim its mastery over ignorance, and professional skill its triumphs over disease and death.

It has been said by Dr. Samuel Johnson, that the duties of the medical practitioner are limited "*to a melancholy attendance on misery; a mean submission to peevishness, and a continual interruption of pleasure.*" This is, indeed, a severe commentary on a profession, the very object of which is to add to man's happiness, by healing him in sickness and

comforting him in affliction. But, to carry out these objects effectually, and to be enabled to conquer disease, in its varied and multiplied forms, you must apply your minds to profound and continued study. The science of medicine is a science of ages; it bears the impress and authority of an unbroken chain of mighty minds—and medicine at this day is but the superstructure raised on the principles laid down by Hippocrates himself. It is progressive, but yet it is stable—it is not a thing of caprice, nor does it claim any affinity with the transcendental novelties so popular in our own times. The principles of medical science are not so mutable that they can be accommodated to individual taste; nor are they so complete a fiction that they can be adapted to the current fashion with the same facility that the tailor will alter the skirt of your coat, or the hatter the shape of your hat. Money cannot purchase the secrets of her temple—nor will legerdemain ever be recognized as one of the elements, on which she lays claim to public confidence. There is nothing ephemeral in the character of her precepts—nothing transitory in the well deserved reputation of her votaries. The lessons, which she inculcates, and the principles which she establishes, are lessons and principles confirmed by the experience of centuries, and hallowed by the testimony and sanction of the profoundest sages of ancient and modern times. We owe it to the great dead—to those glorious and learned fathers from whom these precepts have been derived, that we guard them against desecration—rather should they be looked upon as sacred oracles, confided to our custody, and to be preserved with filial care and affection. It is a legacy rich and precious, and worthy to be transmitted to future generations—let the chain of succession be perfect so that the science of medicine may take its place among the enduring things of this world. You whom I am now addressing will constitute in part the connecting link between the present and future—and to you will that future look for the preservation of the trust so soon to be committed to your charge. The elements of knowledge, necessary to the performance of this important trust, you seek in this University—

and it can scarcely be necessary to say that the lessons taught here will be the results of the accumulated wisdom of past ages—their great charm will be that of attested truth, and they will rest upon foundations broad and impregnable.

In return for the confidence you have manifested in selecting the Faculty of this Institution as your instructors, no effort shall be spared to carry out your best hopes, and fulfil the high expectations of your friends. We feel deeply the responsibility of our respective positions—to us has been assigned the duty of inculcating on your minds the principles, which are hereafter to guide you in the treatment of disease; and it cannot be disguised, that the lives and happiness of those to be confided to your care may depend on the knowledge you receive in these halls. For myself personally, I cannot contemplate the duties of my chair in this University with other than feelings of great anxiety and distrust—they are duties which come directly home to the heart, for they involve the discussion of the dangers and sufferings to which woman is subjected during the various periods of her existence. These periods are characterized by distinct and important phenomena, which are justly entitled to the serious attention of every medical man, who cherishes a proper love for his profession; and is anxious, whilst achieving a reputation for himself, to confer upon the afflicted of his race the solid benefits of a science intended, by the God of the universe, to minister to the wants of his suffering creatures. Woman, from her infancy to old age, is an object of constant interest; and it is not strange that a being so tender, and yet so full of endearments, should have called forth the admiration of the philosopher, and the fervid praises of the poet. Her history is but the narrative of good deeds—in health she is our pride, in disease our solace; and, in the faithful discharge of her duties to society, she is the idol of all hearts. Like a ministering angel, she soothes us in affliction; and, under the depressing influences of adversity, she inspires hope, and incites to renewed effort. Who has not felt the cheering influence of her smiles, and the encourage-

ments of her eloquence in the dark hour of despondency? Abandoned by friends, and left to the cold charities of a selfish and heartless world, the husband of her bosom then knows how to appreciate the depths of her love, and the sincerity of her vows.

‘ There, drink my tears while yet they fall,
Would that my bosom’s blood were balm,
And, well thou knowest, I’d shed it all
To give thy brow one minute’s calm.
Nay, turn not from me that dear face—
Am I not thine—thy own loved bride—
The one, the chosen one, whose place,
In life or death is by thy side ! ’

As wife, mother, sister—in a word, in every situation of life, virtuous woman is the kind and fast friend of man. Is it, therefore, not due to this self-sacrificing being, that we, who know so well how to value her excellence, should labor assiduously to diminish the sufferings, and assuage the sorrows incident to her sex? The duty of instructing you how to assuage these sorrows, and rescue her from the perils by which she is surrounded, devolves on me; and I need not say that I will endeavor most faithfully to perform this office.

Parturition constitutes but a small portion of the department committed to my charge. The difficulties and perils of the lying-in chamber are in themselves subjects of vast interest to the medical practitioner, and they will receive during the session their full measure of attention; but there are other topics embraced in the department of obstetric science, which demand the profound investigation of every pupil, who may desire distinction as an accoucheur. I allude to the diseases peculiar to females. In the whole circle of medical science, there is no class of maladies which, if properly understood, presents a more certain basis for fame and fortune than those, which appertain to the sexual organs of the female; and it must be conceded that the attention they have received in this country is by no means commensurate with their importance. It is, indeed, melancholy to behold the devastation, which these affections are making among our

fair country-women. Look, for example, at the gay and apparently joyful maiden as she passes you in the street, decorated with the adornments of fashion, and loaded with all the tinsel that wealth can purchase. To the casual observer, she possesses that charm of life—health. But amidst all this gayety she is often the victim of disease which, simply from neglect, proves the basis of early death. Consumption, that scourge of our race, is frequently the result of disordered action in the womb which, in being overlooked by the practitioner, terminates in disorganization of the lungs. Thus it is that many an interesting creature is prematurely removed from earth, the original cause of her disease never having been suspected!

The maladies peculiar to females, from their very nature, lead to much embarrassment on the part of the practitioner. It is too often the case that his opinion is not requested until serious, if not fatal progress has been made in the disease. The delicacy of the female very naturally urges her to a concealment of her sufferings, until finally bodily torture, which she is no longer able to endure in silence, compels her to invoke professional counsel. But alas! how often does it happen that, under such circumstances, the physician is forced to the acknowledgment that the disease is beyond the efficacy of medicine, and his duties limited to the palliation of present suffering! Again, the practitioner will be sent for; the patient is unwilling to communicate freely with him in reference to her situation; she contents herself with stating that her health is infirm, that she is troubled more or less with pain in her back, and is anxious to receive from the Doctor some strengthening medicine! This is but too generally the substance of the conversation between, patient and physician—and hence it is not surprising that public confidence should be somewhat shaken in the efficacy of our art; and that people, sensible on all other subjects, should thoughtlessly commit their health and lives to nostrum venders, and wreckless empirics. No physician, who is thoroughly imbued with the principles of his science, and who places a proper value on his reputation, will suffer

the simple declarations of his patient to guide him in either the diagnosis or treatment of disease. The very foundation of successful treatment is diagnosis ; or, in other words, if you wish effectually to combat disease, you must first ascertain not only that it exists, but you must distinguish the organ affected, and especially discriminate between organic and functional derangement ; you are to be careful, too, not to confound sympathetic influences with organic lesion. If these principles be true, when applied to the treatment of disease in general, they are emphatically so in regard to the disorders of the uterine system, connected as it is to the various portions of the economy by important and multiplied sympathies.

The ancients possessed but a very general idea of the true condition of the womb ; and their knowledge of its sympathies was vague and indefinite. They certainly, however, ascribed to it extraordinary power ; and although ignorant of its exact relations to the rest of the system, yet, if we turn to some of the older writers, we shall find that a species of sovereignty was claimed for it over the other organs of the body. Among others, Plato observes, "that the womb is a wild beast that obeys no law ; but which, when its desires are unsated, wanders about within the body, and excites all sorts of irregular motions." Now, it must be admitted that this picture of the womb is true, not only in outline, but in every particular, physiologically considered ; and we must concede that the ancients, unaided as they were by the lights of anatomical and physiological science, and, therefore unable to explain the phenomena of sympathy, certainly entertained very significant notions of the controlling influence of the uterus over the other organs of the animal economy ; and appreciated the truth of the aphorism promulged by Van Helmont in the 17th century : "*Propter solum uterum est mulier id quod est.*" With the general ignorance, which prevailed among the ancients in regard to the minute anatomical structure of the womb, it is, indeed, surprising that they should have possessed such striking views of the relations

of this organ to other portions of the system. This, however, is but another evidence of their habits of close observation. Galen suspected the existence of nerves in the uterus, and he was led to the conjecture from the admitted properties of the organ—sensibility and contractility. Since the time of this illustrious observer, numerous anatomists have given attention to the investigation of this subject; but the honor is awarded to Dr. William Hunter of having been the first to examine critically the nerves of the gravid uterus, and suggest the interesting fact that they become enlarged precisely like the blood-vessels in proportion as pregnancy advances. Doctor Robert Lee, of London, has recently made some valuable contributions on the subject of the nerves of the uterus; it is admitted that this viscus, in addition to other sources, derives an abundant supply of nerves from the great sympathetic; and it is through the influence of these nerves that the various functions of the womb are performed. Nor is it difficult, with these facts before him, for the practitioner to understand how remote organs may frequently exhibit the appearance of disease, when in truth the disturbance is merely secondary, or the effects of a cause traceable to an affection of the womb itself! It is not for me to say how many lives have been sacrificed, and what severe suffering entailed on the female, by the neglect of this fundamental principle in the treatment of the maladies peculiar to her. A patient, for example, complains of great distress in her back; she cannot exercise without an aggravation of her suffering; she has been told by her former attendants that she is laboring under rheumatism, or, as it is termed, *lumbago*—the whole *materia medica* has been unavailingly exhausted in her behalf—a victim to protracted suffering, and experiencing no relief, her confidence receives a severe shock; she is about to abandon regular practice and have recourse to *sarsaparilla*, (which at this moment seems to be a specific for every species of malady,) or *Mesmerism*, which, by converting her into a mirror, will enable the sagacious operator to see whether the liver is not attached to the central

portion of the *tendo-achillis*; or the anterior division of the brain found its way into, and become a part of the adipose matter of the omentum! But fortunately, before subjecting herself to this most luminous yet mysterious system of therapeutics, she resolves to make one more effort to obtain relief; and accordingly applies to a medical man who, in lieu of prescribing for mere symptoms, and who does not believe that because there is uneasiness or pain in a part, that, therefore, that part must of necessity be the seat of primary disease, proceeds at once to a scientific examination of the case. He knows that the great secret in the successful treatment of maladies is to trace effects to causes; not to rest satisfied until the very source of the trouble is reached—in a word, *to know what the matter is*. Thus, after a critical analysis of all the features of the case, looking at it in its varied aspects, he ascertains the true and only cause of the sufferings, which his patient has endured for years, and which were fast carrying her to the grave—he finds that the pain in the back, the *lumbago*, are indeed, but shadows reflected from the neck of the womb, which is, the true seat of disease. Having, therefore, satisfied himself that chronic engorgement of the *cervix uteri*, or some other morbid condition of this part is really the cause, and the sensations in the back but the effects, he applies his remedies, reduces the engorgement of the uterus, restores the organ to its normal state, and his patient to health and happiness—“*Causà sublatà tollitur effectus*.” I might, if it were deemed necessary, call your attention to numerous other diseases, which have baffled the skill of the practitioner simply because, in his treatment, he has violated that cardinal principle of tracing effects to causes. Why is it that *hysteria*, *chorea*, *ammenorrhea*, *mennorrhagia*, *dysmennorrhœa*, *fluor albus*, *leucorrhœa*, &c., which bear so heavily, and often, too, so fatally on suffering woman, have triumphed over professional effort, and brought their victims, if not to death, at least to years of agonizing torture. Is it because these maladies are without remedy, and bid defiance to professional learning and skill? Have the splendid minds which have

been consecrated to the investigation of these disorders brought forth nothing but the humiliating confession that they are beyond relief? Such an hypothesis cannot, for an instant, stand before the brilliant revelations of pathological science, which disclose to us the important truth that the affections I have just named are, for the most part, but so many groups of symptoms indicative of either functional or organic disease of the womb—and if viewed as symptoms, and not as primary diseases, they would readily yield to judicious treatment.

In order more fully to illustrate this subject, let us suppose, for a moment, that a patient is laboring under menorrhagia, or profuse menstruation, and should apply to one of you for professional advice. She informs you that, for the last two years, she has scarcely been free for a day from this discharge of blood—she has consulted numerous physicians, and has had administered to her every variety of medicine—she has employed a dozen different astringent injections per vaginam, and all without relief. This constant drain on her system has not failed to show its effects—her face is blanched—her strength gone—her digestive powers almost destroyed—cold feet and hands—a circulation so feeble that the pulse can scarcely be detected—the slightest exercise producing palpitation of the heart, vertigo, syncope. In a word, she appears before you a perfect wreck, and to the ordinary observer her case is without hope. Her measure of suffering is indeed full; she is surrounded by all the luxury that wealth can procure—but prostrated by disease, and now brought to the verge of the tomb by a malady that has resisted all treatment, she would fervently pray for death, did not the strong and sacred ties of nature tell her that she has something besides herself to live for! She thinks of her husband and children—the former, devoted and kind—the latter young and helpless; at an age, too, when they are most dependent on a mother's love and care. These feelings touch her heart deeply, and she makes a last effort to regain her health, in the trust that she may be spared to her family. It is, therefore,

under circumstances like these, when all earthly hope is cut off, and a lingering death in prospect, that you may be summoned to give your professional opinion. You investigate most carefully the whole history of the case—the discharge of blood which has heretofore been viewed and treated as the disease, you regard merely as the effect or symptom of disease elsewhere. You direct your attention to the uterus—a vaginal examination is instituted—and you find, projecting through the mouth of the womb, a small tumor insensible to the touch, with its base downward and its pedicle upward, attached to some portion of the internal surface of the organ—and you at once recognize a *polypus*. This is the disease—the flooding has been occasioned by it alone—and as long as the polypus is suffered to remain so long precisely will the hemorrhage or drain be kept up, until finally the patient sinks from absolute exhaustion. You, therefore, proceed without delay to remove the polypus—the blood ceases to flow, the drain is closed—and by your science and skill the patient is not only rescued from impending danger, but she is restored to health and the bosom of her family. She looks upon you as the kind friend who, with the sanction of Heaven, has arrested her progress to the grave; on her heart are impressed feelings of abiding gratitude for the services rendered in the hour of her need—and as long as that heart shall continue to beat it will do so in grateful remembrance of one, who has been the humble instrument of prolonging the life of a cherished wife and mother, and dispensing happiness to those so dependent on her care. Such a victory would, indeed, be one of priceless value—and it is such conquests that are truly worthy the ambition of the scientific practitioner. Believe not, gentlemen, that I have presented you an exaggerated picture—it is full of truth; and, when you shall have become engaged in practice, you will have exhibited to your observation many of the same character. If your minds be properly imbued with the principles of obstetric science, cases such as I have just described, should they be confided to your charge, will prove the corner stone of your fame and fortune.

It is my duty to guard you against a prevailing error in practice, which seems to have been consecrated by almost universal custom. If a female labor under a vaginal discharge, whether mucous or purulent, she is supposed by her friends and herself to be affected with the ordinary female complaint—the “whites,” or *fluor albus*, as they sometimes denominate it; and it is regarded as a simple weakness. This is one of the most common disorders to which the female is liable, and is often the indication of serious disease in the womb. It is, however, too frequently viewed with indifference by the practitioner from the very circumstance that it is of ordinary occurrence; and, in consequence of neglect at the inception of this discharge, especially when it depends on organic disease of the womb, most disastrous results ensue to the unhappy patient. She employs, for this supposed weakness, the various remedies suggested by her friends, but experiences no relief. At last she sends for a physician, tells him she has the *fluor albus*, and wishes him to prescribe a wash. The physician accordingly recommends some astringent lotion, from which she derives not the slightest benefit. Discouraged, and believing there is no remedy adequate to her case, she resolves to bear her troubles in silence, which, if they do not ultimately produce serious disorganization, will, at least entail on her much annoyance and suffering. Now, I would ask, what is meant by the “whites?” Is it a term entitled to consideration—or is it a mere vulgarism—a mantle, if you choose, for ignorance. The expression is employed by the female to indicate that she is troubled with a discharge from the vagina, not of blood, but of a mucous or purulent nature. Every well-educated accoucheur knows that the discharges from the vagina are four in number;—sanguineous, purulent, mucous and watery—and he also understands that there are various morbid conditions capable of producing each of these evacuations. His first duty, therefore, on being consulted is to ascertain the character of the discharge. Suppose it is mucous, what is next to be done? Why promptly to discover the specific cause. Likewise, he knows, that there are

several conditions of the female system capable of giving rise to this particular form of discharge—for example, ascarides in the rectum, warty excrescences about the vestibulum, polypus and prolapsus uteri, bloody tumor of the meatus urinarius, &c. &c. He examines, therefore, with great caution; the true source of the difficulty is ascertained; the proper remedies applied, and he at once relieves his patient. But the discharge may partake of a purulent character. In this case, his attention is directed to the womb—and it is not improbable that, under these circumstances, he will detect ulcers in the neck of this organ—these ulcers he heals by appropriate treatment, and nothing more is seen of the discharge. I have repeatedly been called to cases of this description, in which the blunder consisted in mistaking the secretion for the disease. You see, then, how important it is for you to comprehend thoroughly the principles on which you are to proceed in the treatment of these maladies—and you cannot fail to perceive how abundantly these principles will enable you to soothe in their anguish, and rescue from disease those who, at all times, but especially in the hour of suffering and peril, have a natural and earnest claim on our sympathies.

Another common error in practice is to impute the various ailments of the female to *falling of the womb*; and hence, if we are to credit what is said on this subject by certain practitioners, *falling of the womb* is the true cause of all female complaints. It would, indeed, be much nearer the truth to affirm that this affection is very commonly the result of carelessness on the part of the physician in not detecting, at an early period, disease of the cervix of this organ, which, by being suffered to progress, terminates in chronic engorgement, thus causing the uterus to descend, and producing a veritable prolapsion. It has been shown by Lisfranc, to whom the profession is under deep obligations for the light he has thrown on the causes and treatment of affections of the womb, that *prolapsus uteri* is rarely a primary disease, but usually consequent upon enlargement of the *cervix* which, by its increased weight, pulls the uterus into the vagina. With

this simple explanation, which undoubtedly is based on facts, it must be evident that the very means usually resorted to for the cure of falling of the womb, are the direct agents of mischief—they not only do no good, but are positively injurious. Every medical man, who possesses a proper knowledge of his profession, is well aware that this disease is extremely rare among unmarried ladies. What, therefore, must be the character of a practitioner, who can see no other cause for the sufferings and ill-health of a young lady, than *falling of the womb*, and consequently subjects her to the most cruel and unjustifiable examination. I have heard of several young creatures in one family, averaging from sixteen to eighteen years of age, condemned to this most shameful desecration of their persons. A physician, to be habitually guilty of such practices, must in all truth either be a knave, or labor under confirmed *monomania*—not, however, more confirmed than the mental delusion, which could induce mothers to tolerate this unnecessary and indelicate exposure of their guileless daughters!

In elucidation of the statement that females have been frequently treated for falling of the womb, when in fact it did not exist, I could call your attention to numerous instances, which have presented themselves to my own observation; and I shall take the liberty of citing the following case, because, in addition, it illustrates most perfectly what I have endeavored to impress on your minds—*if you wish to cure disease first ascertain its true nature.*

During the last Winter, I was requested to visit professionally a married lady from the state of New Jersey. The history of her case was simple and to the following effect:—In June, 1842, she experienced uneasiness in the region of the womb, and slight pain in passing water. There was more or less discharge of mucous from the vagina, and sexual intercourse occasioned at times great distress. These were the incipient, and only symptoms of her malady. A physician was consulted, and immediately pronounced the disease *to be falling*

of the womb. Pessaries were introduced—abdominal supporters applied, but without affording any relief to the suffering patient; whilst, on the contrary, the pessaries tended to aggravate the pain by the pressure they exerted on the seat of disease. Another practitioner was consulted, and reiterated the opinion already advanced. Having continued under his care for more than ten months, without deriving the slightest benefit, and experiencing a positive increase in her sufferings—the pain and difficulty in passing water becoming more aggravated—she resolved to visit the city of New York in search of professional advice. She arrived here in December last, and I was requested to see her. On hearing the history of the case, I frankly told her that I did not believe she had *falling of the womb*, for the simple reason that her symptoms were not characteristic of any such ailment. I proposed an examination, which was cheerfully consented to, as the lady was most solicitous to obtain relief. The uterus I found in a perfectly healthy condition and in its natural position. In passing my finger along the *urethra*, the patient experienced a sensation of pain, and this circumstance, together with the difficulty of which she complained in passing water, attracted my attention especially to this point. I could detect no disease in the uterus or vagina; in attempting to introduce an ordinary female catheter into the urethra I was completely foiled; and, on minutely examining the condition of this passage, I discovered that the lady's sufferings were entirely due to a *stricture of the urethra*. *Stricture of the female urethra* I had never seen previously to this occasion; and, as far as my knowledge extends, no case of the kind had ever occurred in this country; at least, no record has been made of it. Velpeau, in his great work, cites but three cases of *stricture of the female urethra*, and remarks that its occurrence is extremely rare. In the course of three months, I succeeded in removing the stricture, and the lady returned to her home entirely restored to health. It is proper for me to observe that Doctors Detmold and Satchwell visited this pa-

tient with me on two occasions, and heard from her own lips the statement, which she made of what occurred previously to my seeing her.

I must beg your indulgence whilst I mention another case, which had been mistaken for *falling of the womb*; and which, if it did not result most disastrously was certainly not the fault of the medical gentleman, who preceded me in attendance. On the 10th day of last July a lady, residing in this city, sent by note a request that I should pay her a professional visit. She informed me that, for the last few months, she had been under the care of a practitioner who pronounced her to be laboring under falling of the womb—that he had on one occasion introduced an instrument, (a speculum I imagine,) which gave her so much uneasiness that, in twelve hours afterwards, a miscarriage was the consequence. I was also informed by the lady that she had been under the necessity of calling repeatedly at the house of this practitioner, his engagements being so numerous that he could not find time to visit her. She had faithfully observed all his directions, but received no benefit from his treatment. In my first interview with this patient, after hearing the above statement, I requested her to give me a full account of her symptoms. She remarked that since the birth of her last child, about twelve months since, she experienced great irritation about her bladder—her nights were much disturbed by more or less desire to pass water—being obliged to leave her bed more than a dozen times during the night. The irritation of the bladder had entirely disfranchised her from all social intercourse—and she could not with any degree of comfort leave her house. This state of things had continued without any palliation to the time of my visit, and her sufferings had produced an evident inroad on a constitution, otherwise vigorous. I then asked her if her last labor had been unusually protracted, or whether she had experienced at the time any difficulty about the bladder. To which she replied that her labor was natural and of short duration—but the doctor, who attended her in confinement, in attempting to introduce

a catheter into the bladder for the purpose of drawing off the water, gave her much pain, and caused a slight discharge of blood, unaccompanied, however, by any flow of urine. This was all the information I obtained from the patient, and I think you will agree with me that there was nothing in the case to justify the suspicion that her difficulty was attributable to *falling of the womb*. On examination, I found the womb entirely free from disease, and in its natural position. I detected just within the *meatus urinarius* a small ulcer, which was most probably the result of injury inflicted by the catheter. This ulcer I regarded as the only cause of her suffering, and informed the lady with great confidence that in a few days she should be restored to health. On the following day, assisted by Doctor Trantham, of South Carolina, in whose presence the above statement was repeated by the patient, I touched the ulcer with the nitrat Argenti—ordered mucilaginous drinks—and, on the fifth day after the operation, she took a long walk without inconvenience; to the present period she has never experienced the slightest irritation or pain about the bladder. Her health has continued excellent, and she is at this time in the sixth month of gestation.

Those of you whose taste or preference may lead to a special study of the diseases of women, will discover that they are numerous and almost of endless variety. They produce not only great physical distress, but often bring sorrow to the domestic hearth. Woman, at every period of her existence, is liable to disease and suffering—and it would appear to the ordinary observer that God, for some wise yet mysterious purpose, had imposed on her penalties and afflictions far heavier than those which our sex are called upon to bear. Such may be the belief engendered in the vulgar mind, after contemplating the constant and imminent perils by which the female is more or less surrounded during the various eras of life. But the philosophic eye, glancing as it does at the admirable laws on which all health is based, sees at once that it is the violation of these laws alone which

produces such disastrous effects on the female frame. The refinements of civilization, and the consequent departure from those salutary influences so necessary to that harmony of action without which a healthy condition of the system cannot be maintained, are making fearful inroads on the females of the present generation ; so that, whilst on the one hand the scholar is gladdened by the triumphs of civilization, the philanthropist on the other cannot but lament the evils which necessarily follow in its train. It was the pride of the ancients to impart to their children robust and vigorous constitutions ; and could a mother of those sensible times again visit earth, look upon the present condition of society, and examine its effects on the females of our day, she would indeed think that human nature had near run its course ; she would search in vain for those who would remind her of her own ruddy and vigorous daughters—and, from the fullness of her heart, she would drop a tear over poor degenerate humanity. Honor I say to the man who may succeed in awakening parents to a proper sense of the serious injuries inflicted on their daughters, both morally and physically, by subserviency to the demands of modern society ! If the diseases peculiar to women be more frequent at the present time than formerly—and the fact is most satisfactorily established—the frequency is to be attributed to changes in mode of life and education, and to the increase of nervous excitement, the immediate effect of these changes. Compare, for example, if you desire to appreciate the influences of education and mode of life on the health of the female, the buxom lass of the country with the tender and frail belle of this metropolis. And in order to obtain the full benefit of the comparison, let it be instituted at the period of puberty—a most trying and critical period of female life—so critical, indeed, that it is often the index of future health, or of premature and painful decline. The function of menstruation, which exerts such a controlling influence over the economy, appears in the former case with marked regularity, and in entire accordance with the appointments of nature ; whilst, in the latter,

in consequence of influences which have subjected the nervous system to continued excitement, thus prematurely developing the vital forces, menstruation is characterized by evident aberrations, and more or less derangement in the various functions of the body. This departure from the exactions of nature is too frequently followed by the penalty of severe suffering and disease. The young and thoughtless girl who, in her wayward career, so far contravenes the laws of nature as to interfere with the menstrual function, imposes on herself a life of sorrow, if not of irremediable ill-health. Between this function and the thoracic viscera there is a close alliance, which unhappily too often escapes the observation of the practitioner. Palpitation of the heart, asthma, hemoptysis, are common consequences of disturbed action in the uterus; and, instead of being regarded as the direct effects of uterine derangement, should they be treated without any reference to their legitimate cause, serious, if not fatal results must necessarily ensue. Look, too, at the condition of the entire nervous system in cases of either retained or suppressed menstruation. It is thrown into extraordinary excitement, producing *convulsions, hysteria, catalepsy, chorea*, and even *mania*. Do not these facts declare, in silent yet eloquent language, the complete subjection in which the womb holds the general system; and, at the same time, point out to the practitioner the absolute necessity, when nature is incompetent to act for herself, of preserving by judicious treatment the integrity of functions appertaining to this most important organ?

When you shall have become engaged in the practice of your profession, you will discover that the maladies to which I have alluded will necessarily occupy much of your attention; your counsel and aid will frequently be demanded—and the happiness, and even the lives of those who thus give you their confidence, may rest entirely on your judgment and skill. Sacred, therefore, will be the responsibilities which are soon to devolve on you; and no man of conscience can contemplate them without having his mind filled with doubt and anxiety—and his best energies consecrated to the attainment

of knowledge, which will enable him promptly to meet the trying emergencies of professional life.

You, gentlemen, who are just on the threshold of the profession, and have not been engaged in the details of practical duty, will scarcely credit the schemes resorted to in this city, under the guise of science, for the purpose of plundering the sick and the dying. I could cite several thrilling cases in confirmation of what I now state; but for the present, one will suffice, to convey to you some idea of the monstrous practices tolerated in the very heart of a Christian community. Sometime since, a lady of great intelligence from one of our Western cities visited New York for the purpose of seeking professional advice. Soon after her arrival in this city I was requested to see her; and, after listening to the history of her case, I became satisfied that she labored under a formidable disease of the womb. Without, however, expressing any opinion, I left her with the promise that I would see her on the following day, and then give her my views of her case. Accordingly, after a careful examination, I discovered that this lady was affected with *ulcerative carcinoma*; and being strenuously urged, both by herself and friends, not to disguise my opinion, but to state unequivocally whether there was any hope of recovery, I frankly remarked to her that her disease was beyond permanent relief; and all that could be done would be to palliate her sufferings. This opinion was received with extraordinary firmness by the patient; and, as I thought, with some degree of doubt both by herself and friends. After continuing my visits for a week, it was very evident, from certain manifestations, that some influence had been at work to destroy confidence in my judgment; and the patient expressed with great kindness, yet with decision, her strong belief that I was in error in reference to her disease. Under these circumstances, the course for me to pursue was a very obvious one; and I, therefore, suggested that other counsel should be taken in order that the opinion I had given might

be confirmed or set aside. My colleague, Dr. Mott, was requested to see the case with me—and his examination corroborated in every particular the opinion previously expressed. I continued to visit this unfortunate lady, and do all in my power to assuage her anguish; her sufferings were most severe, but she bore them with the fortitude and resignation of a Christian. Her mind had become satisfied with the opinions that had been given; and believing that there was no earthly hope, she was reconciled to die. Just at this time, a kind friend put into her hands a pamphlet recounting “wonderful cases of cure of all sorts of maladies by Mesmerism.” This poor creature, weighed down by suffering, her form attenuated to a skeleton, her mind enfeebled, and her reason rendered infirm by protracted and agonizing disease—unable, of course, to form a competent judgment on any subject, placed the fullest faith in the statements set forth in the pamphlet; and, at her earnest solicitation, the Mesmeriser was sent for. After the first act of his jugglery, he informed her that the doctors were altogether deceived as to her disease—she had no cancer but labored simply, as he termed it, under a “*concatenation of visceral deficiency* !!” This “concatenation of visceral deficiency,” he pledged himself promptly to remove, and restore to perfect health. The friends of the sufferer, passing as she was rapidly to the grave, although they had no confidence in the declarations of the heartless impostor, could not resist the fervent appeals of the dying woman; and he was, therefore, permitted to practice his unholy tricks. Day after day he continued his Mesmeric operations, promising with renewed emphasis a speedy recovery. One morning, however, on arriving at the house, and proceeding to the room of his victim, he was accosted by the nurse, who informed him that the patient had expired the night before! Unmoved by this disclosure, and with perfect indifference, lost as he was to every feeling of humanity, he left the house without a word of comment, satisfied in his own mind that he had obtained the object for which he had consented to desecrate

his character—the wages of his wretched deception. The God of truth and justice will assuredly deny mercy to a man, who could thus wantonly revel over the credulity of a dying and suffering woman! It is time to speak out on this subject—let every honest man rise up in his might, and, by moral weapons, drive from our midst the fiends who would thus speculate with human life, and bring disgrace on human character. The deeds of infamy practiced on the innocent and unwary in this enlightened city, and the fortunes accumulated by these traffickers in the happiness and lives of their fellow-beings, are subjects in every way entitled to the grave consideration of those who by law are the conservators of the public weal.

In conclusion, gentlemen, allow me to remind you that, in the language of Lord Verulam, "*Knowledge is power*;" and if you wish to succeed brilliantly in the profession of your choice, gather knowledge—with this, associate patient and persevering industry. Elements like these will prepare you for the conflict of mind with mind—they will enable you to enter the contest well fortified; and, whilst you will have no reason to indulge in gloomy apprehensions of the future, you will have around you a shield impenetrable to the shafts of either envy or detraction. Detraction is the usual penalty of success in our profession. Men who, from natural indolence or imbecility of mind, find themselves unable to contend with you for the prize of public favor, are sometimes foolish enough to suppose that they can destroy at will a well-earned reputation by the propagation of base and groundless slanders. Deluded creatures! have you not yet learned, from the fatal rebound, that these dastardly attacks on character re-act with fearful effect on your own guilty heads!

Do not, for a moment, credit the fiction that either fame or fortune can be acquired without laborious toil. There is no royal road to professional eminence, and although money may be amassed by imposing on the credulity of the un-

learned in medicine, and substituting trick for science, yet, to every right-thinking man, wealth so obtained is, indeed, "filthy lucre," for it is derived at the expense of character. But when I survey this hall and look at the immense class of students before me, coming, as a large portion of you do, from remote sections of this country, I cannot but feel that the motive which induced you to leave your distant homes and seek instruction here, is one honorable to yourselves, and most creditable to the profession of which you are soon to become the guardians. It is manifest that you place a proper appreciation on the importance of medical study—you have not been seduced by the infatuations of the day—your faith has proved too strong and your honesty too refined to be moved by the pretensions of modern empiricism. Directing, therefore, your aspirations to a higher and more enduring object than the attainment of an ephemeral reputation—and anxious as you must be to secure to yourselves an honorable distinction in the profession to which you are about to dedicate your lives, allow me to bid you welcome to this university—to assure you of the devoted and sincere interest, which the faculty feel in your behalf—and, at the same time, to pledge their best efforts faithfully to discharge their respective duties. It is for you that we shall labor—your welfare will be our first and cardinal object—and if this university is to maintain her present position, it can only be done through the testimony of her alumni. You now stand enrolled among her sons, and the time is not far distant when, having fulfilled her requirements, you will become candidates for the highest privileges she can confer on worth. These you will receive with her benedictions, and her ardent wishes for your success and happiness. Remember, gentlemen, the seal of this university will soon be confided to your custody—it will, I feel assured, suffer no dishonor in your hands.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK.—DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE.

THE Lectures in this institution will commence on the last Monday of October, and continue four months.

VALENTINE MOTT, M. D., Prof. of the Principles and Operations of Surgery, with Surgical and Pathological Anatomy.

JOHN REVERE, M. D., Prof. of the Theory and Practice of Medicine.

GRANVILLE SHARP PATTISON, M. D., Prof. of General and descriptive Anatomy.

MARTYN PAINE, M. D., Prof. of the Institutes of Medicine and Materia Medica.

GUNNING S. BEDFORD, M. D., Prof. of Midwifery and the Diseases of Women and Children.

JOHN WILLIAM DRAPER, M. D., Prof. of Chemistry.

WM. H. VAN BUREN, M. D., Prosector to Prof. of Surgery.

WM. DARLING, M. D., Demonstrator of Anatomy.

The fees for a full Course of Lectures amount to \$105. The Student can attend one or more of the Lectures as he may be disposed, and pay only for those which he attends. The fee for the Diploma is \$30. The Matriculation fee is \$5. The fee for admission to the Dissecting Rooms and Demonstrations is \$5.

The most ample opportunities for Clinical Instruction will be afforded to the Students of the University, and the facilities for dissection will be all that can be desired. The *matériel* is abundant and cheap. The Dissecting Rooms will be open on 1st of Oct.

The *New York Hospital*, 15 minutes walk from the College Building, is visited daily; and the students have an opportunity of studying the various Medical and Surgical diseases of that Institution.

The *Eye and Ear Infirmary*, in which more than 1,400 patients are prescribed for annually, is open to the students.

The *University Surgical Clinique* is attended every Saturday at the College Buildings by Prof. MOTT, and the University Students witness the various operations performed by the Professor. More than 600 patients, affected with every variety of malady, are brought before the Class during the session.

The *University Lying-in Charity*, under the charge of Prof. BEDFORD, is ample in its arrangements. During the past five sessions more than 1,200 cases of Midwifery have been attended by the Students of the University.

In addition to these facilities for Clinical observation, there are the various Dispensaries and Charities of the city, containing not less than 40,000 patients, presenting every possible aspect and character of disease.

Excellent Board and Lodging can be had in the vicinity of the College for \$2,50 to \$3 per week.

The number of Students in attendance the last session was 407; and the Degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred on 135.

N. B.—Students on arriving in the city, by calling at the College Building, 659 Broadway, and asking for the Janitor, will be conducted to Boarding-houses.

Any farther information respecting the institution can be had by addressing the Secretary, Prof. Draper, 659 Broadway.

By order,

Nov. 16, 1846.

JOHN W. DRAPER, Sec'y.

P. S.—The Faculty have resolved in future to deliver a Preliminary Course of Lectures during the month of October, commencing the first of the month. Lectures will, therefore, be given daily during the entire month of October, *without extra charge*. The Lectures will, in no way, interfere with the integrity of the regular Winter-session. The October Course, together with the opening of the Dissecting Rooms on the 1st of the month, will, therefore, present additional facilities to those Students, who may be disposed to avail themselves of them.